

ARMY CONTRIBUTION TO STATE DEPARTMENT
PREPARED BY THE A C OF S, G-2

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I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. To estimate the likelihood of direct or indirect Soviet aggression in Iran in the near future.

II. SOVIET OBJECTIVES AGAINST IRAN

2. Soviet objectives against Iran probably include the political and military domination of the entire country. Such domination will be required to insure Soviet possession of:

- a. The oil resources within Iran;
- b. The strategic routes from the Soviet Union to the oil fields within the other countries of the Persian Gulf area, to the eastern and southern approaches to Turkey, and to the Cairo-Suez area;
- c. Ice-free ports on the Persian Gulf; and to
- d. Prevent the Allies from utilizing potential bases in this area for military operations, primarily air, against Soviet Central Asia and the petroleum areas of the Caucasus.

III. PRESENT STATUS AND TRENDS

3. The present official Soviet policy toward Iran is more conciliatory than it has been for the past several years. A trade agreement has recently been concluded between the two countries, and negotiations have been initiated to effect a settlement of the outstanding differences between the two countries, including the payment of the Soviet debt amounting to about twenty million dollars and a settlement of the frontier disputes which have continued for many years.

4. The Soviets officially have been making friendly gestures toward Iran and at the same time have been attempting to subvert the Kurdish tribes and have actively carried out other subversive efforts in Iran through the communist Tudeh Party. The communist subversive activities of the Tudeh Party are largely underground and are increasing. However, only in a few industrial centers of Iran has Communism made significant headway. The Tudeh

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Party is not strong enough to overthrow the Iranian Government. Soviet espionage is prevalent throughout Iran.

5. Iranian officials recently have indicated an increased although cautious willingness to effect improved relations with the Soviets, although Iran remains basically pro-Western in orientation. The current Iranian attitude appears to be resistance to Soviet pressure.

IV. POSSIBLE COURSES OF SOVIET ACTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

6. Soviet courses of action toward attainment of Soviet objectives against Iran so far have been confined to harassing tactics and subversive attempts. Neither of these courses of action has been successful. The current improvement in Soviet-Iranian relations does not necessarily portend Iranian submission to Soviet objectives.

7. It is improbable that Soviet conquest of Iran can be accomplished through military forces operating under the guise of Soviet Kurds and other "liberation forces" without the overt assistance of Soviet armed forces. The Iranian Army, consisting of approximately 123,000 personnel organized into ten infantry divisions and four independent brigades, is believed to be capable of maintaining internal security and successfully defending Iran against any quasi-military forces such as visualized above.

8. The Soviet Army maintains sixteen divisions in the trans-Caucasus area. Twelve of these divisions are adjacent to the Iranian-Turkish border. The Soviet forces adjacent to the Iranian border are so disposed as to be capable of employing surprise attacks to seize and hold key communication centers and to establish control over railroads and highways in Iran and thus prevent their destruction. Without disclosing their intent the Soviets are capable of moving as many divisions as they deem necessary into the areas adjacent to the Iranian border prior to launching an attack on Iran. It is estimated that in event of a surprise attack advance units of the Soviet Army could reach the Tigris-Euphrates Valley

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and the Persian Gulf within about 15 days during the dry season of the year. The Soviets possess the capability of overrunning Iran and gaining control in from 45 to 50 days, although some irregular resistance will undoubtedly continue for months.

V. INDICATIONS OF INTENT

9. The current Soviet policy of conciliation, characterized by conclusion of the trade agreement and proposals for settlement of border problems, could result in a strengthening of Soviet influence in Iran. Such tactics, however, represent more of a long-term than a short-term threat and may be a prelude to aggressive action in the future.

10. No unusual activities have been noted recently among Soviet armed forces adjacent to Iran. However, as noted in paragraph 8 above, the Soviets maintain armed forces opposite Iran in such strength as to launch an invasion without warning and without redistribution of forces.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AS TO INTENT

11. The domination of Iran is of strategic importance to the U.S.S.R. Soviet domination of all or parts of Iran can be achieved only by overt use of Soviet Armed Forces. It appears probable that the conquest of Iran by Soviet Armed Forces will be undertaken only under one of the following conditions:

- a. When the Soviets believe that no retaliatory military action will be attempted by major powers, or
- b. When the Soviets believe that any military opposition offered by major powers will be local in scope and when the Soviets are willing to counter such opposition, or
- c. Concurrent with other Soviet military operations in connection with a general East-West War.

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